

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00513 050822Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

DHA-02 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /077 W

-----050831Z 068908 /11

R 050725Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2965

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIEUT 0513

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: THE VIEW FROM CHRISTIAN LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 0400

1. CHARGE CALLED ON PHALANGIST LEADER ALEXANDER GEMAYEL FEB 3 AT GEMAYEL'S REQUEST. ALEXANDER GEMAYEL, WHO IS COUSIN AND CLOSE FRIEND OF PHALANGE MILITIA LEADER BACHIR GEMAYEL, IS ON OF YOUNGER, MORE MODERATE CHRISTIAN LEADERS. CONVERSATION COVERED A VARIETY OF TOPICS AND GIVES A GOOD EXAMPLE OF ATTITUDES OF MARONITE CHRISTIAN POLITICIANS. HIGHLIGHTS FOLLOW:

2., RELATIONS WITH THE SYRIANS. GEMAYEL IS VERY WORRIED THAT GREAT INCREASE OF SYRIAN PRESENCE IN EAST BEIRUT AND OTHER CHRISTIAN AREAS DURING PAST TEN DAYS MAY SPARK AN INCIDENT. WHEREAS SYRIANS HAD EARLIER BEEN STATIONED ONLY AT MAJOR CROSSROADS, THEY ARE NOW OCCUPYING MANY BUILDINGS, HAD PENETRATED INTO MOST REMOTE AREAS OF ASHRAFIYA, AND ARE GENERALLY THROWING THEIR WEIGHT AROUND IN CHRISTIAN LEBANON. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 00513 050822Z

GEMAYEL INDICATED THAT CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE DOING THEIR BEST TO KEEP THEIR FORCES UNDER CONTROL, BUT ARE NOT CERTAIN OF SUCCESS, PARTICULARLY IF SYRIAN "PROVOCATIONS" CONTINUE.

3. POLITICAL RECONCILIATION. GEMAYEL WAS STRONGLY CRITICAL OF SARKIS AND HIS GOVERNMENT FOR NOT MAKING ANY ATTEMPT TO BEGIN A POLITICAL DIALOGUE ON FUTURE STRUCTURE OF LEBANON. CHRISTIANS

WERE ACTIVELY DISCUSSING VARIOUS PLANS AMONG THEMSELVES (SEE REFTTEL), BUT THEY HAD NO ONE TO TALK TO ON THE OTHER SIDE BECAUSE NON-CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAD EITHER BEEN DISCREDITED DURING PAST TWENTY MONTHS OR WERE AFRAID TO SPEAK UP FOR FEAR OF RETALIATION BY PALESTINIANS OR LEBANESE LEFTIST EXTREMISTS. GEMAYEL ALSO CRITICIZED AL-HUSS CABINET, SAYING IT CONSISTED OF MEN WHO HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN PRIVATE LIFE BUT WHO HAD NO POLITICAL STANDING OR EXPERIENCE AND HAD YET TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY HAD THE LEADERSHIP ABILITY TO GET LEBANON MOVING OUT OF ITS PRESENT MORASS. THE PEOPLE, HE SAID, FOUND NO SENSE OF DRIVE OR PURPOSE IN THEIR GOVT, THE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES WERE NOT BEING RECONSTITUTED, THE REBUILDING OF BEIRUT HAD NOT BEGUN, AND THERE WAS A GENERAL FEELING OF STAGNATION.

4. DISMANTLING THE CHRISTIAN MINI-STATE. GEMAYEL SAID THAT SARKIS WAS NOW ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN TRYING TO STOP CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW CHRISTIAN AIRPORT AT HAMAT AND ABOLISHING THE MARONITES OFFICE OF FOOD SUPPLY. THIS LATTER ORGANIZATION, WHICH GEMAYEL HAD APPARENTLY ORGANIZED AND RUN FOR THE PAST 14 MONTHS, WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE THAT EVERYONE IN CHRISTIAN LEBANON HAD A MINIMUM SUPPLY OF FLOUR AND SUGAR. THE ORGANIZATION, GEMAYEL SAID, HAD OPERATED WITHOUT LOSS, WHILE THE OFFICIAL GOL CEREALS OFFICE HAD ALWAYS LOST MILLIONS. HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY PRESIDENT SARKIS WANTED TO ABOLISH ONE OF THE FEW SUCCESSFULLY OPERATED QUASI-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE COUNTRY WHEN THERE WERE SO MANY OTHER GOVT DEPARTMENTS THAT WERE NOT OPERATING AT ALL AND DESPERATELY NEEDED HIS ATTENTION.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 00513 050822Z

5. THE U.S. ROLE IN LEBANON. GEMAYEL STARTED AND ENDED OUR ONE-AND-A-HALF-HOUR CONVERSATION WITH A STRONG APPEAL FOR THE UNITED STATES TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN LEBANON. HE SAID THE U.S. SHOULD (1) PROVIDE POLITICAL SUPPORT TO PRESIDENT SARKIS AS A COUNTERWEIGHT TO SYRIA; (2) ADVISE SARKIS TO ACT MORE DECISIVELY TO GET THE COUNTRY MOVING AGAIN BOTH POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY, AND (3) PROVIDE LEBAN WITH SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN KEY FIELDS.

6. COMMENT. ALEXANDER GEMAYEL IS THE THIRD CHRISTIAN LEADER TO MENTION TO US DURING THE PAST TEN DAYS HIS DEEP CONCERN THAT THE INCREASED SYRIAN PRESENCE AND ACTIVITY IN CHRISTIAN-HELD LEBANON WOULD LEAD TO AN INCIDENT THAT WOULD HAVE DIRE CONSEQUENCES FOR THEM. (THE OTHER TWO ARE DORY CHAMOUN AND BACHIR GEMAYEL.) THEY ARE WELL AWARE THAT ANY CHRISTIAN ATTACK AGAINST SYRIAN ASF UNITS WOULD BE SUICIDAL BECAUSE ASAD, FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS, WOULD BE OBLIGED TO CRUSH IT MERCILESSLY. THE LEBANESE CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE THEREFORE DOING THEIR BEST TO CALM THEIR FOLLOWERS, BUT ARE FEARFUL THAT THERE MAY BE SOME INCIDENT THAT

THEY WILL HEAR ABOUT TOO LATE.

LANE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHRISTIANS, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 05-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BEIRUT00513
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770042-0307
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770270/aaaacjgt.tel
Line Count: 118
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e5f60fcb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BEIRUT 400
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3401814
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE VIEW FROM CHRISTIAN LEBANON
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e5f60fcb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009